

# **CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

TO THE SOUTH SHORE ESTUARY RESERVE COUNCIL

## **CAC Meeting Minutes**

March 9, 2021

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

### **Present:**

Maureen Dolan Murphy, Chair CAC/Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
George Gorman Jr., New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Artie Kopelman, Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island (CRESLI)  
Judi Bird, League of Women Voters Brookhaven  
Sally Kellogg, NYS DOS/Reserve Office  
Jeremy Campbell, NYS DOS/Reserve Coordinator  
Rachel Neville, NYS DOS/Reserve Office  
Pete Topping, Peconic Baykeeper  
Kaetlyn Jackson, National Park Service, Fire Island National Seashore  
Adrienne Esposito, Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Arielle Santos, Seatuck Environmental Association  
Emily Hall, Seatuck Environmental Association  
George Costa, Trout Unlimited/Art Flick Chapter  
Lane Smith, Chair TAC/NY Sea Grant  
Josh Halsey, Peconic Land Trust

### **1. Introductions**

M. Dolan Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

### **2/3. NYS Parks Department: Increase of Usage during COVID and CAC Discussion: Protecting Estuary During Increased Usage**

M. Dolan Murphy recapped January CAC meeting focusing on an increased use of outdoor spaces in 2020 and introduced G. Gorman. G. Gorman provided background information of OPRHP and specific LI parks as well as notable accomplishments. 2020 had the greatest number of visitors to NYS Parks ever, for all of New York State and Long Island. Half of the total number of visitors for all NYS Parks were from the Long Island region. Typically, there are 25-26 million visitors per year however, there were 30 million in 2020. Long island has 37 total parks/facilities with a wide variety of recreational options including paddleboats, boat ramps, the Captree fishing fleet, horseback riding, hiking, fishing, etc. Jones Beach had 8 million visitors in 2020 despite capacity being limited to 50% with weekday attendance being the highest in years.

Question: A. Esposito: Will attendance be limited to 50% again, in 2021?

Answer: G. Gorman: Unsure. 2020 was very staff intensive and it was difficult to enforce social distancing. While it is the hope the capacity can increase the answer is unknown at this time.

The COVID testing site was established in March at Field 3 and performed 1,500-2,000 tests a day and about 2,000 vaccines a day.

Question: A. Kopelman: Have you recorded or noticed a change in the ecosystem within the park due to the increased visitors?

Answer: G. Gorman: It was not noted but this is something to investigate. OPRHP staff, the Piping Plover stewards, and environmental staff continued their work in 2020. No negative impacts to the ecosystems were passed along. There was an increase in litter on trails due to the increased visitation. Robert Moses had over 6 million visitors in 2020. Special events at NYS Parks include but are not limited to the Jones Beach theatre, Bethpage air show (with support from Citizens Campaign for the Environment), and Magic of Lights at Jones Beach. Jones Beach Energy and Nature Center is an environmental center which is run by Parks staff with programming by Parks staff. Some days Gilgo Beach, Sore Thumb and Democrat Point were shutdown because of the potential damage to the beach by the number of vehicles on the beach.

It was also noted that there has been an increase in the number of dogs at parks where dogs are not allowed. The State Police were asked to help policing for dogs where not allowed. It was also noted that some wildlife photographers have gone off trail and trampled areas when trying to take pictures.

OPRHP would like to work with the SSER to increase education of the how to respectfully recreate in the natural environment while at parks and in nature. A. Kopelman suggested to connect educators to create materials about this issue. K. Jackson suggested creating and posting QR codes at parks/natural areas that link to memes or snapshots to relay the message. G. Gorman said that Jones Beach Nature Center could help inform the public. M. Dolan Murphy said the CAC wants to help with work with OPRHP on this issue.

#### **4. Patchogue River Development**

K. Jackson relayed information on behalf of Tiffany Bowman from the Patchogue Coalition Against the Cornerstone Development (<http://stopcornerstone.com/>). In 2019 a four story, 50 unit development was proposed on a 2 acre lot in a flood zone. Some of the community was concerned about the project and the overdevelopment of the area. The Patchogue Planning Board did not recommend the special permit which would have allowed for residential use at this site and the application was pulled. In 2021 it was reintroduced but there were not many changes made by the developer. The project is still in a flood zone, and many concerns of the community have not been addressed. The permit is currently with the Planning Board. There is only a draft Riverfront Plan and residents re concerned about overdevelopment.

Question: A. Kopelman: Can anything be done to affect the process?

Answer: K. Jackson: This is meant as an update. M. Dolan Murphy might have recommendation actions.

Question: G. Costa: Will they be attached to the Patchogue sewer system?

Answer: K. Jackson: Yes, that is the understanding.

M. Dolan Murphy said that groups who want to get involved should reach out to K. Jackson. A. Esposito noted that this development goes against the Suffolk County Planning Commission Climate Change guidelines for development that are currently being drafted.

#### **5. South Shore Estuary Reserve Office**

R. Neville reviewed the SSER SAV gateway story with the CAC members and noted any comments. The story will be reviewed by subject matter experts and anyone who wants to be included should reach out to R. Neville. A. Kopelman noted that he wanted to be a part of the review. J. Campbell stated that the expert review will be soon. L. Smith said the TAC is working on an SAV action plan.

#### **6. Public Comment/Announcements**

**K. Jackson** – National Parks Service is investigating opportunities for living shorelines and nature-based solutions for bayside erosion. NPS is talking with other states with similar issues. The end goal is to be informed and have a design an idea, there are 4 sites to be examined. A two-day workshop is scheduled in May, invitation only.

**Maureen Dolan Murphy** – On April 8 Citizens Campaign for the Environment, The Nature Conservancy and Operation SPLASH are hosting a Save The Western Bays Public Forum with speakers including DEC, Nassau County and Suez.

**Emily Hall** – River herring training has concluded, and surveying starts March 15. There is a River Herring email list serve and Facebook page for those who are interested. The Community Science LI webinar series is still ongoing. The next presentation is March 25 on bats.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.